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Letter dated 4 October 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Belarus and Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to address you on behalf of the members of the Like-minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries: Armenia, Belarus, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama and Philippines.

Under the co-chairmanship of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Belarus and Costa Rica, the Group held its first ministerial meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 23 September 2016. Besides the members of the Group, the following countries also participated in the meeting: Ecuador, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Thailand and Viet Nam. The President of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean joined the event and delivered their statements. The participants of the meeting benefited from your kind contribution in the form of the video message.

As an outcome of the meeting, the members of the Group adopted the ministerial declaration (see annex), which describes the goals, objectives and modalities of the Group.

Wishing to raise the awareness of the States Members of the United Nations about the outcome of the first ministerial meeting of the Group, we should be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 19.

(*Signed*) Andrei **Dapkiunas**
Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Juan Carlos **Mendoza García**
Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 4 October 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Belarus and Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

First ministerial meeting of the Like-minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries

23 September 2016

Declaration

We, the Ministers and high-level representatives of the countries constituting the Like-minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries, Armenia, Belarus, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama and Philippines, conducted the first ministerial meeting of the Group at the margins of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations;

We welcomed the creation of the Like-minded Group of Supporters of Middle-Income Countries at United Nations Headquarters in New York and agreed that the Group should become a significant instrument in strengthening coordination and promoting the interests of middle-income countries within the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna;

We stressed that the middle-income countries classification, created by the World Bank, does not effectively reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of the reality of these countries, preventing the establishment of integral mechanisms that best respond to their sustainable development challenges. We therefore emphasized the need to advance towards the integration of comprehensive, integral and multidimensional development criteria to properly address the sustainable development challenges of these countries;

We highlighted that middle-income countries constitute the only significant group of countries that does not have a United Nations system-wide and long-term strategy for development cooperation;

We also noted that the challenges of these countries are reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement and other relevant multilateral outcomes, and in this regard agreed that necessary organizational arrangements should be made to adopt a coordinated approach by the United Nations to this group of countries;

We discussed and agreed upon the major goal of the newly created Like-minded Group to systematically and comprehensively promote the interests of middle-income countries in the United Nations;

Furthermore, we also agreed to pursue the following tasks in support of the strategic goal of the Like-minded Group:

- Advancing in the establishment of a comprehensive United Nations system-wide and long-term strategy aimed at facilitating sustainable development cooperation and coordinated support towards middle-income countries

- Conducting an outreach strategy that includes events and diverse activities to raise awareness of the challenges of middle-income countries within the United Nations community and the general public
- Advocating and promoting middle-income country views and perspectives through statements, resolutions and active participation in sustainable development-related processes, within United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and funds
- Supporting and promoting the establishment of multidimensional measures of progress that go beyond income criteria and that incorporate the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental

We agreed to meet regularly at the margins of the United Nations, including through high-level meetings, in order to ensure political coordination and guidance and enhance the implementation of the interests and goals of the Like-minded Group. Such meetings could be envisaged in different formats;

We underlined our intention and determination to support the advancement of the ambitious middle-income countries agenda, and requested the Like-minded Group to actively engage in the process of promoting the interests of middle-income countries in the United Nations and other relevant forums.